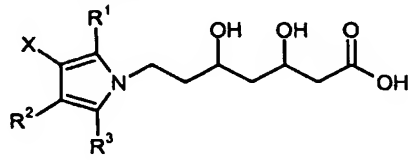
CLAIMS

1. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:

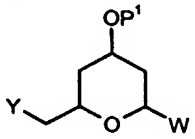


wherein

R^1 represents a hydrogen or a hydrocarbyl group
R^2 represents a hydrogen or substituent group
R^3 represents a hydrogen or a hydrocarbyl group
X represents a hydrogen or substituent group

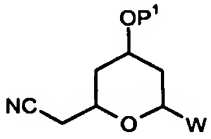
which comprises

a) cyanating a compound of formula (1):

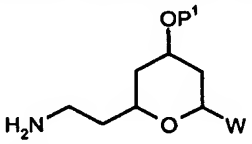


wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group,

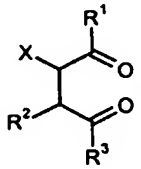
to give a compound of formula (2):



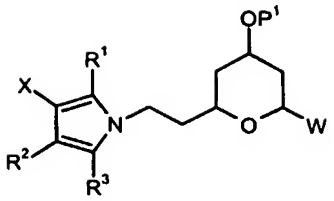
b) reducing the compound of formula (2) to give a compound of formula (3):



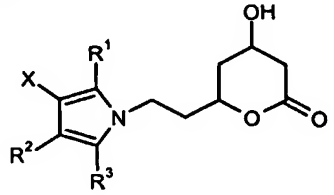
c) coupling the compound of formula (3) with a compound of formula (4):



to give a compound of formula (5):

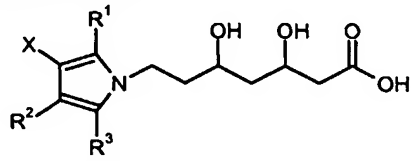


d) when W represents -OP^2, deprotecting and then oxidising the compound of formula (5) to give a compound of formula (6):

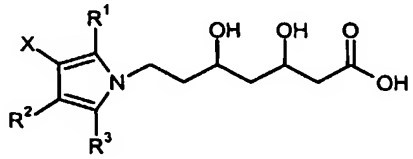


and

e) subjecting the compound of formula (5) when W represents =O, or compound of formula (6) to ring-opening, and removal of any remaining protecting groups, to give a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:



2. A process according to Claim 1 for the preparation of a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:



wherein

R^1 represents an alkyl group, such as a C_{1-6} alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group

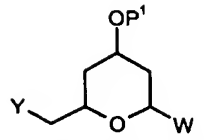
R^2 represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group

R^3 represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group

X a group of formula –COZ, wherein Z represents -OR^4, in which R^4 represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or –NR^5R^6, wherein R^5 and R^6 each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R^5 is H and R^6 is phenyl

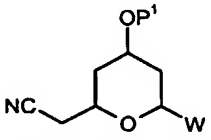
which comprises

a) cyanating a compound of formula (1):

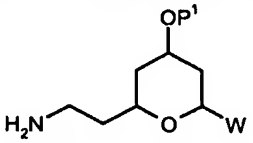


wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group,

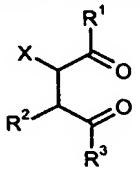
to give a compound of formula (2):



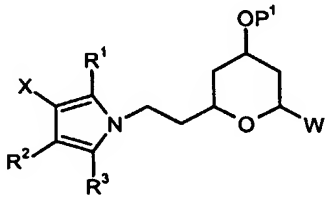
b) reducing the compound of formula (2) to give a compound of formula (3):



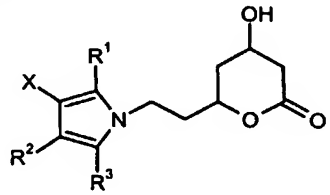
c) coupling the compound of formula (3) with a compound of formula (4):



to give a compound of formula (5):

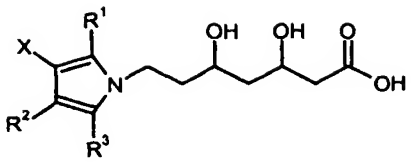


d) when W represents $-OP^2$, deprotecting and then oxidising the compound of formula (5) to give a compound of formula (6):



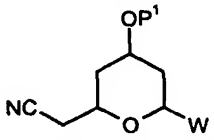
and

e) subjecting the compound of formula (5) when W represents =O, or compound of formula (6) to ring-opening, and removal of any remaining protecting groups, to give a compound of formula (7) or salts thereof:

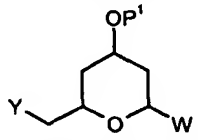


3. A process according to Claim 2 wherein R^1 is an isopropyl group, R^2 is a phenyl group, R^3 is a 4-fluorophenyl group and X is a $-CO_2Me$, $-CO_2Et$ or -CONHPh group

4. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (2):

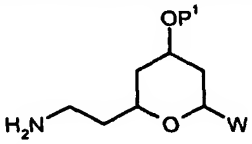


which comprises cyanating a compound of formula (1):

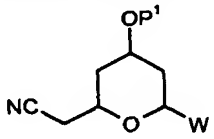


wherein Y represents a halo group, preferably Cl or Br; P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

5. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (3):



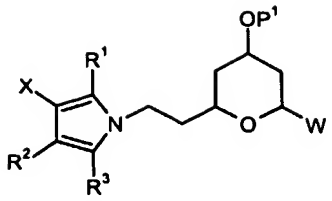
which comprises reduction of a compound of formula (2):



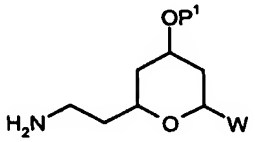
wherein P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

6. A process according to Claim 4 or Claim 5 wherein P^1 represents a benzyl or a silyl group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents a methyl group

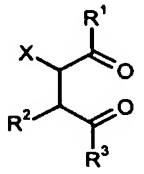
7. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (5):



which comprises coupling the compound of formula (3):



with a compound of formula (4):



wherein

R^1 represents an alkyl group, such as a C_{1-6} alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group;

R^2 represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group;

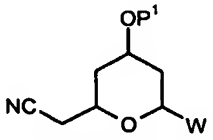
R^3 represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group;

X a group of formula –COZ, wherein Z represents $-OR^4$, in which R^4 represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or $-NR^5R^6$, wherein R^5 and R^6 each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R^5 is H and R^6 is phenyl;

P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, preferably a benzyl or silyl group; and

W represents =O or $–OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, preferably OP^2 where P^2 is a methyl group.

8. A compound of formula (2):

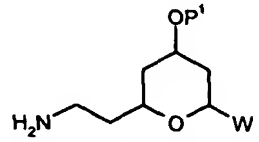


wherein P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $–OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

9. A compound according to Claim 8 wherein P^1 is a protecting group and preferably W represents $–OP^2$, and more preferably P^1 and P^2 are different.

10. A compound according to Claim 9 wherein P^1 is a benzyl or silyl group and W represents OP^2 where P^2 is a methyl group.

11. A compound of formula (3):

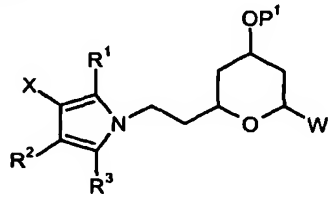


wherein P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group, and W represents =O or $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group.

12. A compound according to Claim 11 wherein P^1 is a protecting group and preferably W represents $-OP^2$, and more preferably P^1 and P^2 are different.

13. A compound according to Claim 12 wherein P^1 is a benzyl or silyl group and W represents OP^2 where P^2 is a methyl group.

14. A compound of formula (5):



wherein

R^1 represents an alkyl group, such as a C_{1-6} alkyl group, and preferably an isopropyl group;

R^2 represents an aryl group, preferably a phenyl group;

R^3 represents an aryl group, preferably a 4-fluorophenyl group;

X a group of formula –COZ, wherein Z represents $-OR^4$, in which R^4 represents an alkyl, preferably a methyl or ethyl, group, or $-NR^5R^6$, wherein R^5 and R^6 each independently represent H, alkyl, or aryl, and preferably R^5 is H and R^6 is phenyl;

P^1 represents hydrogen or a protecting group; and

W represents $-OP^2$, in which P^2 represents hydrogen or a protecting group.